UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly

FIFTIETH SESSION

Official Records

FIFTH COMMITTEE
63rd meeting
held on
Tuesday, 21 May 1996
at 3 p.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 63rd MEETING

Chairman: Mr. AMARI (Tunisia)
(Vice-Chairman)

Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. MSELLE

CONTENTS

AGENDA ITEM 116: PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1996-1997 (continued)

Commitments in respect of new mandates (continued)

OTHER MATTERS

This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of the publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, room DC2-794, 2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate corrigendum for each Committee.

Distr. GENERAL
A/C.5/50/SR.63
10 June 1996

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

96-80649 (E)

In the absence of Mr. Vilchez Asher (Nicaragua), Mr. Amari (Tunisia), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 116: PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1996-1997 (continued)

Commitments in respect of new mandates (continued) (A/C.5/50/67)

1. Ms. INCERA (Costa Rica), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the Group had taken note of the contents of paragraph 16 of document A/C.5/50/67, in which the Secretary-General had reiterated his decision to implement fully the programmes and activities included in the programme budget approved by the General Assembly for the biennium 1996-1997. The position of the Secretary-General was in keeping with the decisions contained in resolution 50/214, which clearly stated that changes to programmes and activities were the prerogative of the General Assembly.

2. The Group of 77 and China had noted with concern the Organization's difficult financial situation and the Secretary-General's problems in implementing new mandates given the budgetary reductions previously decided by the General Assembly.

3. The Group had on several occasions endorsed the complete validity of the budgetary process as approved in General Assembly resolution 41/213 and it considered that expenditures generated within that framework should be addressed in accordance with the procedure articulated therein.

4. She also noted the Secretary-General's assertion that it would be impossible for him to absorb expenditures within the resource limits approved in resolution 50/214 and indicated that no agreement had been reached on possible means of absorbing such expenditures. Nevertheless, as a compromise formula, the Group of 77 and China would be willing to support a decision authorizing the Secretary-General to enter into commitments for the implementation of the United Nations International Civilian Mission in Haiti (MICIVIH), the United Nations Mission for the Verification of Human Rights and of Compliance with the Commitments of the Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights in Guatemala (MINUGUA), the United Nations Office of Verification (ONUV) and the Commission of Inquiry for Rwanda in the amounts requested. Such a decision would also request the Secretary-General, in the context of the report on the implementation of the budget, to present the amount of the additional resources required on the basis of the real capacity of absorption.

5. Mr. GELBER (United States of America) said that his delegation had focused special attention on the Secretariat's claimed inability to absorb the cost of several programmes within the existing budget, and had been troubled by the underlying assumption that the Secretary-General would be unable to fund a number of programmes without additional assessments. Such an assertion implied an inability to stay within the $2.608 billion budget level for the current biennium.

6. The report had failed to explore the option of cost-effectiveness. Many of the activities carried out by the Secretariat had explicit legislative mandates, but none of those mandates specified in precise detail how they were to be implemented. His delegation was convinced that opportunities existed to carry out the Organization's business more efficiently and at less cost.

7. His delegation's objective was to press for the efficient accomplishment of agreed business. His Government had been encouraged by the statement of the Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management to the effect that the Secretary-General intended to deliver mandated activities fully, but with the realization that cost reductions could not be achieved while implementing the full programme of work as originally envisaged.

8. It was the view of his delegation that the programme of work as originally envisaged had to be examined for inefficiencies and ineffectiveness; adjustments should then be made, thereby achieving cost savings. Member States would have to work together to determine which programmes no longer served their original purpose. His delegation believed that the Secretary-General was best placed to identify such programmes.

9. He proposed that the remarks introducing the Secretary-General's report should be endorsed. The report could then be interpreted to mean that the Secretary-General was confident that he would be able to operate within the budget. With regard to the programmes referred to in document A/C.5/50/67, he believed that with modest effort resources could be found to fund them. It was inconceivable to his Government that space could not be found for them within the existing budget.

10. In times of financial stringency, Member States had the obligation to exercise maximum of fiscal responsibility. His delegation would continue to work with others to identify and eliminate unnecessary and low-priority activities. While not in a position to agree to any expenditures that would demand more resources from Member States, at the same time his Government considered it necessary to proceed with the valuable programmes outlined in document A/C.5/50/67.

11. Regarding intergovernmental action, the forthcoming meeting of the Committee for Programme and Coordination would enable delegations and the Secretariat to identify unnecessary and low-priority activities.

12. Mr. ODAGA-JALOMAYO (Uganda) endorsed the statement that had been made on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, but wished to stress his delegation's concern at the apparent discrepancy between the actual report of the Secretary-General and the introductory remarks which had prefaced it. The Secretary-General had stated on a number of occasions that the cost of certain programmes could not be absorbed within the budget, yet the introductory remarks to his report implied that such absorption was indeed possible. Moreover, the introductory statement had given the impression that the views of Member States which had been sought in informal consultations were the views which would henceforth be implemented. But views put forward during informal meetings were purely consultative in nature and had to be submitted to all Member States for consideration and approval during a formal meeting. It appeared that undue

emphasis had been placed on the views of certain delegations; any views arising in informal meetings should be reflected equally or not at all.

13. He hoped that no attempt would be made to abandon the budgetary procedures which had been so carefully worked out in General Assembly resolution 41/213; any attempt to do so would immensely complicate the entire budget process. His delegation also opposed a selective implementation of resolution 41/213; it should be implemented as a package or not at all. In any event, Member States should not try to change the budget as they went along, nor should they embark on an endless debate about which programmes should be spared and which should be cut. All delegations should respect each other's political interests.

14. With regard to the programmes referred to in document A/C.5/50/67, additional funding might be necessary. His delegation was therefore not in a position to take note of the introductory statement to the Secretary-General's report.

15. Ms. GOICOCHEA (Cuba) said that her delegations position was to allocate the additional resources requested by the Secretary-General. The General Assembly had reaffirmed the mandates of the missions in question, which in itself indicated their vital importance. In addition, their funding had already been cut and the Secretary-General had made it clear that he would be unable to absorb the additional savings requested. Her delegation believed that he had fully lived up to his commitments to the General Assembly. She also endorsed the remarks made by the Ugandan delegation regarding the unequal treatment of the different views on the question of cutting funds for old mandates in order to finance new ones, as reflected in paragraph 12 of document A/C.5/50/67. In addition, she supported the view that General Assembly resolution 41/213 should be implemented as a package on the basis of consensus. A selective implementation was out of the question since it would ultimately entail renegotiating the entire budget procedure.

OTHER MATTERS

16. The CHAIRMAN, responding to questions raised by a number of delegations about the availability of stationery in conference rooms, said that the matter would be taken up by the Bureau of the Fifth Committee.

The meeting rose at 4 p.m.